

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 2, 2010

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

We are writing to share our concerns regarding future bidding rights between members of the Elberton Granite Association and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' National Cemetery Administration.

Since 1941, members of the Elberton Granite Association have been producing monuments for graves of all types out of the abundance of Georgia Blue Gray Granite quarried in that area. In fact, they have produced so many at such a high quality that they have earned the name "Granite Capitol of the World." Members of the Elberton Granite Association have been serving government vendors and have been awarded government contracts since its establishment.

After more than sixty years of competitively bidding alongside Granite Industries of Vermont, the Elberton Granite Association is concerned that two contracts that were recently denied to one of their members will result in the loss of future bidding opportunities. Though these Georgia Granite markers have been placed side by side with markers made from Granite Industries of Vermont for several decades, the National Cemetery Administration has indicated they are now going to award all future granite contracts to a single company in Vermont based solely on the color of the marker.

We are concerned that giving preferential treatment to a single company would result in a loss of cost-effective competition that saves money to the American taxpayer, as well as cause irreparable economic damage to this northeast Georgia community.

We respectfully request that this recent decision be reviewed by you and your staff, taking into account the benefit of a competitive bidding system that allows for each company to stand on its own merits of quality and cost effectiveness. More specifically, what was the rationale behind a recent amendment to the bidding process for the National Cemetery Administration? Thank you for looking into this important matter, and we hope to hear from you soon.

Respectfully yours,

Paul Brown

Frank Johnson

John Lewis

David Scott

Chil Biny Gail

Lawrence Bishop

Johnnie Mae Hat

Lynell Gail G3

Jack K. Gste

Shirley Gail